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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAMA 000057

SIPDIS

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DEPARTMENT OF LABOR FOR PETER ACCOLA AND SUDHA HALEY

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TAGS: ELAB PREL BA HUMRIT

SUBJECT: GOB MOVES FORWARD WITH LABOR UNION REFORMS

REF: 05 MANAMA 1325

Classified By: DCM Susan L. Ziadeh, 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) Ministry of Labor Senior Labor Relations Specialist Ahmed Al-Khabaz told Emboff January 3 that the Cabinet has referred to Parliament revisions to the Trade Union Law allowing the formation of more than one union per organization. Labor Minister Dr. Majeed Al-Alawi had referred the issue to the Cabinet September 2005, but the Cabinet has only now acted on the measure (reftel).

¶2. (C) Ministry of Cabinet Affairs Director of Legal Affairs Dr. Jameel Al-Alawi told Econoff January 5 that the Cabinet had delayed referring to Parliament this measure and one allowing more than one trade union federation, pending ILO consultations. (Note: The General Federation of Bahrain Trade Unions (the Federation) is currently Bahrain's sole union federation. End note.) However, after the ILO failed to respond to repeated GOB requests for consultations on the issue, the Cabinet concluded that time for deliberation had run out. He explained that the Cabinet believed ILO intervention would have been beneficial because the Federation opposes changes that would dilute the influence of the organization and its constituent unions.

¶3. (U) Local daily Al-Wasat quoted Labor Director Al-Khabaz January 7 as saying the GOB will soon endorse the right of government employees to form unions. He called on the Parliament to ratify union-related ILO conventions that would improve Bahraini labor relations.

MONROE